

# A Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs

A PROJECT OF THE MARYLAND CASA DIRECTORS, THE MARYLAND CASA  
ASSOCIATION AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

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## **The Ten Point Performance Model for CASA Programs in Maryland**

### **Maryland CASA Programs:**

- 1. Strive to meet the needs of children in the child welfare system.**
- 2. Train high quality volunteers.**
- 3. Meet the court's needs.**
- 4. Collaborate with other organizations inside and outside the jurisdiction to achieve good results for children.**
- 5. Provide a committed, caring presence for each child and ensure children receive needed services.**
- 6. Maintain a high quality program structure.**
- 7. Demonstrate efforts to reflect the diversity of the children the program serves in regards to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability and geography.**
- 8. Advocate for children to reach permanency.**
- 9. Heighten public awareness of the needs of children in the child welfare system.**
- 10. Follow the Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs established by the National CASA Association and Maryland CASA Guidelines**

## ***A Summary of the Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs***

This Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs was designed by the directors of the local CASA Programs in Maryland, in consultation with the Department of Family Administration at the Administrative Office of the Courts and the Maryland CASA Association.

The purpose of the Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs is to:

- Increase access to CASA advocacy for children in the Maryland courts.
- Leverage program performance by tying a portion of the grant award to the program's ability to meet the ten performance hallmarks developed by the Maryland CASA programs themselves.
- Leverage program performance by providing additional funding tied to increased levels of performance, and by making funding levels more accurately reflect the costs of operating the program.
- Increase the predictability of the grant award for Maryland CASA programs.
- Promote administrative efficiencies by encouraging programs to serve more than one jurisdiction where appropriate.

### **How the Funding Model Works**

To receive an annual CASA grant from the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), Department of Family Administration, CASA programs must submit a grant application. An AOC grant review team, which shall include the Executive Director of the Maryland CASA Association, shall meet to review the applications. Only applications submitted by the application due date will be considered.

**How the Grant Award Is Calculated.** There are two primary parts to the funding model:

- **Part 1** – This is the *quantitative portion* of the model. **The applicant must report the number of active volunteers that served (i.e. assigned to children) during the quarter. (Active volunteers mean the number of active children with volunteers during the quarter.)** This is an average of the four figures reported quarterly to the Maryland CASA Association for the last four quarters before the application is due. That figure determines at what *capacity level* the program is operating. Programs receive a base grant associated with that level.

- **Part 2** – This is the *qualitative portion* of the model. The applicant must complete a narrative that responds to actions they have taken and plans they have made to fulfill the ten point performance measures. Each measure is worth 25 points. Grant reviewers score the grantees on each point. A total score of up to 250 points is given the grantee for Part 2. The Part 2 award is a prorated amount based on the total score. A perfect score of 250 points will merit the grantee the highest possible Part 2 award. For Fiscal Year 2008 the highest possible Part 2 award is **\$35,000**.

*Optional Additional Awards.* In addition to Part 1 and Part 2 funding, potential grantees may apply for two additional optional awards:

- **One-Time Expansion Grant.** A one-time expansion grant may be awarded to permit a program to hire a part-time or full-time supervisor. This type of award is designed to permit programs to expand and add up to an additional 30 volunteers, and remain within the National CASA Standards regarding the staffing necessary for the proper supervision of volunteers. This is a non-renewable component of the grant. If the program is able to expand its capacity, then the following year it should be eligible for funding at a higher *capacity level* which should then permit it to retain the added supervisor.
- **Multi-jurisdictional Bonus.** A program that serves more than one jurisdiction may apply for and receive a flat bonus, to be added to the total grant award. These funds are designed to aid programs in serving multiple jurisdictions. Costs may be used to hire additional supervisory staff, add support staff, provide for facilities or reimburse volunteers or staff for travel to another jurisdiction. The bonus *is* renewable, so long as the program continues to serve the additional jurisdiction. A jurisdiction may receive one bonus for each additional jurisdiction it serves, provided that performance in each jurisdiction is substantial.

*Matching Fund Requirements.* Finally, Maryland CASA programs must continue to provide a one hundred percent match for their total CASA grant award. Matching fund requirements may be waived for start-up programs, at the discretion of the Administrative Office of the Courts. **Matching requirements for the optional one-time expansion grant and the multi-jurisdictional bonus may also be waived at the discretion of the Administrative Office of the Courts.**

To summarize, the CASA grant award is the sum of four possible awards:

- **Part 1 Award** – based on the number of **active** volunteers in the program;
- **Part 2 Award** – based on the program’s efforts to meet the 10 performance elements;
- **One-Time Expansion Grant** – a flat prorated amount for an additional supervisor.
- **Multi-jurisdictional Bonus** – a flat amount per additional jurisdiction.

## **Part 1 – Quantitative Measures**

Maryland CASA programs follow the *Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs* developed by the National CASA Association. These Standards specify staffing levels required based on the number of active volunteers in the program. For example, Standard 7 D requires that local program supervisors be responsible for no more than 30 volunteers or a maximum of 45 cases. For this reason, program costs can be correlated, at least in part, to program capacity. Part 1 of the funding model establishes a base funding level for programs, corresponding to the number of active volunteers in the program.

**Helping Programs Expand.** To aid programs in expanding the number of volunteers they can accommodate and still meet National CASA standards, they need the opportunity to add a supervisor before recruiting new volunteers. Programs seeking to expand will thus need an opportunity to add staff, before they can reach the next capacity level. To permit this, programs can apply for a one-time *expansion grant*. This flat amount is sufficient to permit programs to hire one additional full-time supervisor. Programs seeking to hire a part-time supervisor can apply for less than the full expansion grant on a prorated basis. Applicants should be aware that expansion grants are non-renewable. They are designed to permit programs to increase the numbers served so that the following year their base grant might be at a higher level. If the program fails to maintain a sufficient number of new volunteers during the year of the expansion grant, funding will revert to the appropriate level.

**Programs Serving More than One Jurisdiction.** To encourage programs to expand beyond a single jurisdiction, where appropriate, to capture administrative efficiencies, in Part 1 of the funding model, programs can apply for and receive a flat multi-jurisdictional bonus for each additional jurisdiction they serve. Multiple programs, however, may not serve the same jurisdiction.

**Calculating Capacity Level.** The number of volunteers referred to in the table below is the *average number of assigned volunteers from CASA program quarterly reports for the year. The total reported for each quarter is averaged to obtain the prior year total.*

**Table 1. Calculating Part 1 of the Funding Model – Quantitative Measures**

Capacity Level	Average Active Volunteers for the Last Year	No. of Supervisors Required	Base Funding
LEVEL I	Volunteers: 1 - 20	Supervisors: 1	\$ 20,000
LEVEL II	Volunteers: 21 – 35	Supervisors: 1.5	\$ 24,500
LEVEL III	Volunteers: 36 – 50	Supervisors: 2.0	\$ 43,500
LEVEL IV	Volunteers: 51 – 80	Supervisors: 3.0	\$ 67,000
LEVEL V	Volunteers: 81 – 110	Supervisors: 4.0	\$ 89,000
LEVEL VI	Volunteers: 111-140	Supervisors: 5.0	\$ 111,000
LEVEL VII	Volunteers: 141+	Supervisors: 6.0+	\$ 133,000
EXPANSION GRANT			\$ 22,500
MULTIJURISDICTIONAL BONUS – PER ADDNL JURISDICTION			\$ 15,000

## ***Part 2 – Qualitative Measures***

Maryland CASA Programs follow the ten point performance model outlined below. Each prong of the performance model is considered equally important. Programs must describe their efforts to meet each of the ten points by answering the questions detailed below as a part of their grant program narrative. The narrative must list each point and specify in detail how the performance goal is achieved.

Programs can receive up to 25 points for each of the ten performance areas. The total score can be up to 250 points. Programs are scored on their ability to meet the goals by grant reviewers based on the application narrative and actual knowledge of the program. The amount of Part 2 funding the program receives is based on the Part 2 performance score. For Fiscal Year 2008, programs will be awarded \$60 for each point scored. So, for example, a program receiving a score of 200 will receive \$12,000 in Part 2 funding. A program that receives the highest possible score of 250 will receive \$15,000 in Part 2 funding.

### **The Ten Point Performance Model for Maryland CASA Programs**

Maryland CASA Programs:

#### **1. Strive to the meet the needs of children in the child welfare system.**

- What efforts has your program made to identify and address the need for enhanced program capacity (i.e., number of potential volunteers)?
- Has your program done any strategic planning?
- What additional resources has the program secured to meet any needed growth?
- How does your program collaborate with the court to prioritize which individuals are appointed a CASA?

#### **2. Train high quality volunteers.**

- How does your program meet National CASA standards for screening potential volunteers?
- How does your program meet National CASA standards for training volunteers?
- How does your program provide high-quality in-service trainings for volunteers?
- How do the volunteers rate the quality of the trainings provided?
- How does your program evaluate volunteers?
- How are volunteers supervised?
- How does your program support its volunteers to avoid burnout, renew volunteer enthusiasm and commitment, and retain volunteers once their case is concluded?

**3. Meet the court's needs.**

- How does your program maintain ongoing communications with the court?
- At what point in a case does the court appoint a CASA? What efforts has your program made to ensure CASAs are appointed as early as possible in each case?
- Are CASA reports submitted to the court for every hearing and on time? How do you track this?
- Are CASAs present for all hearings, once appointed?

**4. Collaborate with other organizations inside and outside their jurisdiction to achieve positive results for children.**

- What organizations does your program partner with to improve the handling of child welfare cases?
- How has your organization made a difference in the way agencies or courts serve children and their families?
- What impact has CASA advocacy had on the lives of children in the foster care system? How do you track that impact?

**5. Provide a consistent, caring presence for each child and ensure children receive needed services.**

- Do CASA volunteers meet with children at the children's home? How often? How is this tracked?
- Do CASA volunteers attend all hearings once appointed?
- What services do children with CASAs receive? How have CASA volunteers been instrumental in ensuring children receive the services they need?

**6. Maintain a high quality program structure.**

- Who serves on the board of directors? How are they recruited, and what qualifications are sought in recruiting board members?
- Who staffs the program? What qualifications are sought in recruiting staff?
- How are personnel problems, complaints or concerns addressed?
- Have there been any complaints about staff or board members from volunteers? From clients? From the court? From the community? What was the nature of any complaints, and how were they addressed?
- How are complaints about volunteers handled and addressed?
- How does the program identify or handle conflicts of interest in board members, staff or volunteers?



**7. Demonstrate efforts to reflect the diversity of the children served in regards to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability and geography.**

- What are the demographics of the program's board, staff and volunteer pool? Compare these figures with the demographics of the children the program serves. Specifically address race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability and geography.
- What challenges does your program face in recruiting board, staff and volunteers that mirror the client population? How have you attempted to meet those challenges?
- What outreach activities has your program undertaken in the last year to enhance the diversity of the volunteer pool? What results have you seen?
- What is your goal for the next year, and how do you plan to reach that goal?

**8. Advocate for children to reach permanency.**

- How many cases total were closed by the program during the last year? Of those cases, at the time the program closed its case, in how many was the child in a permanent placement? [How many were either returned to a biological parent/guardian, adopted, TPR granted/pending & child in pre-adoptive home, or are in a relative placement (not adopted).]
- What is the average length of time for a child with a CASA appointed to achieve permanency? What is the average length of time for a child (with or without a CASA) in your program's jurisdiction to achieve permanency?
- What impact has your program had in reducing the number of placements children have before permanency is achieved?

**9. Heighten public awareness of the needs of children in the child welfare system.**

- How has your program educated the community about the needs of children in the child welfare system within the last year?
- In what ways has your program used print media, radio, television, cable and/or the internet in the past year to educate the public about the needs of children in the child welfare system and the role your organization plays?
- What was the most effective educational outreach activity your program undertook within the last year? How do you know it was effective? What was the goal of that activity? What did you learn that other programs might benefit from?
- What outreach initiatives do you have planned for the coming year? What segments of the population do you plan to target, and what is your goal for each initiative?
- How does your program determine its outreach priorities each year?

**10. Follow the Standards for Local CASA/GAL Programs established by the National CASA Association.**

- How does your program measure its performance in light of the National CASA Standards?
- How successful have you been in following those Standards?
- What challenges have you had in meeting the Standards and how have you overcome those challenges?
- Have you received any technical assistance from the National CASA Association or the Maryland CASA Association in meeting those standards?

***Calculating the Total CASA Grant Award***

**Table 2. Calculating the Total CASA Grant Award**

Capacity Level	Part 1 Funding	Part 2 Funding*	TOTAL** Funding	Match Funds Requirement
LEVEL I	\$20,000	\$ 35,000	<b>\$ 55,000</b>	\$ 55,000
LEVEL II	\$ 24,500	\$ 35,000	<b>\$ 59,500</b>	\$ 59,500
LEVEL III	\$ 43,500	\$ 35,000	<b>\$ 78,500</b>	\$ 78,500
LEVEL IV	\$ 67,000	\$ 35,000	<b>\$ 102,000</b>	\$ 102,000
LEVEL V	\$ 89,000	\$ 35,000	<b>\$ 124,000</b>	\$ 124,000
LEVEL VI	\$ 111,000	\$ 35,000	<b>\$ 146,000</b>	\$ 146,000
LEVEL VII	\$ 133,000	\$ 35,000	<b>\$ 168,000</b>	\$ 168,000
One-time Expansion Grant			\$ 22,500	
Multi-jurisdictional Bonus			\$ 20,000	

\* This assumes each program receives the full 250 points and is eligible for full Part 2 Funding.

\*\* TOTAL possible award is calculated assuming the program is not applying for a One-time Expansion Grant or a Multi-jurisdictional Bonus.

## ***Reporting Requirements***

### **Program Information**

Programs must use the *CASA Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Tool (COMET)* for data collection purposes. Programs will be required to report on the progress toward specific project goals as well as provide the following statistical information, on a quarterly and annual basis:

1. The number of court-ordered children in need of assistance (CINA) referred to the program during the quarter/year;
2. The total number of CINAs served by the program during the quarter/year;
3. The number of CINAs whose cases with the CASA program closed during the quarter/year, the reasons for their closures, the length of time served by the program, etc.;
4. The number of new volunteers trained during the quarter/year;
5. The number of volunteers who have actively served (i.e. been assigned to a case) during the quarter/year;
6. The number of inquiries from prospective volunteers and the sources of those referrals to the program during the quarter/year; and
7. The number of hours provided yearly by volunteers (annually only).

The narrative report shall be submitted quarterly within 15 days of the end of each quarter (October, January, April, July) or no further funds will be disbursed. The report shall include program highlights, obstacles encountered in meeting project goals, upcoming events and activities, and any changes in the proposed project plan.

### **Financial Information**

Programs must file a quarterly financial report on a form provided by the Administrative Office of the Courts, as well as proof of matching funds within 15 days of the end of each quarter (October, January, April, July) or no further funds will be disbursed.

## **Fiscal Policies and Procedures**

Programs are required to establish and maintain financial accounting systems and records to accurately account for funds. Minimally, they should conform to the National CASA Minimum Recommended Internal Financial Control Procedures. Programs are required to have an independent audit conducted annually. Grant funds are subject to any additional terms and conditions issued by the Administrative Office of the Courts upon award of grants, and may be terminated if any terms or conditions are violated, or if adequate progress toward project goals is not demonstrated. All financial records must be maintained until audited by the State Legislative Auditors.